

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SR-02 ORM-01 IO-10 AID-05 EUR-12 DPW-01 /086 W

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P R 050440Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2498

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 1361

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: MARKHAM STORY ON THE FALL OF PHUOC BINH

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL NHA

TRANG 5 FEB 75 BEING REPEATED FOR YOUR INFORMATION

QUOTE NHA TRANG 61

REF: A) STATE 023903

B) SAIGON 1284

1. WE ARE POUCHING POLMIL SECTION A MEMO BASED ON THE DEBRIEFING OF THE PHUOC LONG SECTOR OPERATIONS OFFICER, WHO WAS INTERVIEWED BY OUR PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE IN QUANG DUC ON JANUARY 21 FOLLOWING HIS 18-DAY ESCAPE. FOLLOWING DETAILS MAY ADD TO EXCELLENT REBUTTAL IN SAIGON'S 1284.

2. CONTRARY TO MARKHAM'S ASSERTION RE BAD GVN INFORMATION ON THE SIZE AND QUALITY OF THE OPPOSING FORCE, S-3 STATES PHUOC LONG SECTOR KNEW JUST WHICH UNITS WERE OPPOSING IT--7 NVA REGIMENTS AGAINST THE EQUIVALENT OF ABOUT 6 GVN BATTALIONS, MOSTLY TERRITORIAL FORCES.

3. AMONG THE ACTS OF HEROISM RECOUNTED BY THE OPERATIONS OFFICER
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WERE INSTANCES IN WHICH ARVN SOLDIERS, AFTER THEIR ANTI-TANK

MISSILES HAD FAILED TO STOP NVA ARMOR, JUMPED ATOP THE TANKS AND ATTEMPTED TO THROW GRENADES INTO THE HATCHES.

4. NVA TACTICS WERE NOT AS REFINED AS MR. MARKHAM BELIEVES. ACCORDING TO THE S-3, NVA TANKS ENTERED PHUOC BINH UNACCOMPANIED BY INFANTRY--THE SAME TACTIC THAT COST THEM SO HEAVILY IN THE 1972 OFFENSIVE.

5. MARKHAM'S STATEMENT OF "GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SEAL OFF FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRESS THE SOLDIERS WHO GOT OUT ALIVE" IS SIMPLY UNTRUE. CONSUL GENERAL WAS IN QUANG DUC ON JANUARY 13 AND SAW UPI CORRESPONDENT AT BU BIN INTERVIEWING PHUOC BINH SURVIVORS. PROVINCE CHIEF AND HIS STAFF MADE NO ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE AND IN FACT PROVIDED TRANSPORT FOR THIS CORRESPONDENT.

6. PHUOC LONG TERRITORIALS CAME OUT IN GOOD ORDER, BRINGING THEIR WEAPONS WITH THEM AND OFTEN GUARDING GROUPS OF CIVILIAN REFUGEES. THEY AND S-3 TESTIFY TO FREQUENT INSTANCES IN WHICH PHUOC LONG MONTAGNARDS GUIDED AND SUPPLIED SURVIVORS, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, AND WARNED THEM AWAY FROM VC/NVA TROOP CONCENTRATIONS. SIGNED SPEAR
END QUOTE LEHMANN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY PERSONNEL, PHUOC LONG, COMBAT OPERATIONS, HONOR AWARDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON01361
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750041-0666
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750270/aaaackue.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 023903
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <15 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARKHAM STORY ON THE FALL OF PHUOC BINH FOLLOWING SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL NHA
TAGS: MOPS, VS, (MARKHAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006